

Joint Declaration on Animal Welfare

Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands,

recalling that:

- according to Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union animals are sentient beings and therefore the Union and the Member States are committed to pay full regard to animal welfare requirements in formulating and implementing the Union's policies on agriculture, fisheries, transport, internal market, research and technological development and space;
- livestock production in the farming sectors of its Member States is characterised by a strong competitive position and a strong focus on both trade among Member States and export;
- specific animal welfare problems, not only in the livestock production in the farming sector, but also in other sectors, such as those concerning companion animals, horses and other animals kept or traded in the context of an economic activity (e.g. illegal trade in puppies within the EU) are better solved at EU-level;
- European legislation in the field of animal welfare also contributes to a level playing field within the EU and thereby to a well-functioning internal market;
- animal welfare should be further improved on the basis of scientific findings and with due regard for the efficiency and competitiveness of agricultural livestock husbandry;
- animal welfare and animal health are interrelated and therefore the use of antibiotics should be further reduced, also with a benefit to public health;

agree to pool their activities aimed at improving animal welfare and urge the EU Member States and European Commission to acknowledge the need for better regulation, better animal welfare and to promote awareness, EU-standards and knowledge.

Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands:

- **hold the view** that the current animal welfare legislation of the European Union, as it applies to the husbandry, transport and slaughter of animals, must be enforced in a stricter and more harmonised manner;
- **underline** that some of the current provisions of the European Union need to be adjusted to the latest scientific findings, technical innovations and socio-economic trends; meaning, among other things, that
 - animal based welfare indicators should be anchored more firmly,
 - consumer information should be improved,

- improvements should be made to, and certain restrictions placed on, the transport of animals, with regard to e.g. the stipulation of space allowances and journey times and
- non therapeutic mutilations should be reviewed with the aim of phasing them out when possible; mutilations such as beak trimming in chickens should be phased out;
- **deem it necessary to consider** whether specific EU-legislation should be laid down for farm animals other than those already covered by specific EU-legislation, such as turkeys, rabbits, broiler breeders or pullets;
- **deem it necessary to consider** whether specific EU-legislation should be laid down for companion animals (especially dogs and cats) and possibly other animals that are kept or traded in the context of an economic activity;
- **emphasise** the need to improve the competence of people who handle animals and to raise the awareness of other people such as consumers;
- **speak out in favour of** strengthening the synergy effects of the Union's policy fields, such as the Common Agricultural Policy and environmental policy in order to improve animal welfare;
- **support** that the European Union should continue its pioneering role in the field of animal welfare and should actively participate, at both European and international level, in raising awareness for the well-being of animals.

Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands call upon the European Commission to

- **take action** without delay in pursuit of the objectives outlined; in this context, they welcome the measures the European Commission announced in its "European Union Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015" and they support the Commission in implementing these measures. In particular, they look forward to the results of the promised examination into whether the EU legislative framework for animal welfare can be simplified;
- **propose** an updated, comprehensive, clear and simple legislative framework that in addition would improve enforcement;
- **ensure** that a future simplification of the EU legislative framework for animal welfare does not lead to a decline in animal welfare standards or lowering the ambitions to improve animal welfare;
- **promote** in trade agreements and in international forums, EU standards and knowledge as regards the protection and welfare of animals and work towards the full recognition of animal welfare as a non-trade concern in the framework of the WTO;
- **set conditions** – in the framework of trade agreements – to the welfare of animals when their products may be imported into the EU;

- **further improve** the current level of animal welfare in future legislative proposals and to systematically address existing shortcomings in the legislation;
- **establish** an EU platform for animal welfare for stakeholders and competent authorities to generate momentum and focus on the animal welfare challenges faced by the EU.

Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands:

- **agree** to promote and stimulate the cooperation in the areas of animal welfare research, the exchange of experiences on good animal welfare practice, and the improvement of animal welfare in relation to husbandry systems;
- **encourage** all stakeholders to develop voluntary guidelines to improve animal welfare;
- **support** the aim of the European Declaration on alternatives to surgical castration of pigs ('Brussels declaration') and agree to closely cooperate, with each other and with stakeholders, in resolving other animal welfare problems such as other non therapeutic mutilations;
- **urge** all EU stakeholder organisations to sign the Brussels declaration and to act accordingly;
- **step** up the implementation of EU legislation on the docking of pig tails, **urge** all EU stakeholder organisations to make a declaration aimed at phasing out the docking of pig tails and **cooperate** and **stimulate** research and exchange of information with regards to phasing out the docking of pig tails;
- **are of the opinion that** the transfer of research results into practice should be improved;
- **announce** that they will jointly continue to intercede in the work on animal welfare of international organisations, including the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE);
- **agree** to promote animal welfare in international fora such as FAO and OECD;
- **intend** to promote animal welfare in the framework of national and international financial institutions that engage in the farming sector, as well as in the international policy framework for national export credit agencies, with due consideration for maintaining a level playing field;
- **agree** to step up the exchange of information on issues concerning the enforcement and implementation of EU legislation;
- **strive** for a further reduction of the use of antibiotics and **develop** a common strategy to establish a level playing field at EU and international level

Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands invite all EU Member States to join these initiatives and take part in future cooperation to improve animal welfare in the EU.

Vught, 14 December 2014

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